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News Release

Maryland woman sentenced for conspiracy to commit involuntary servitude and harboring an illegal alien for financial gain
-- 14-Year-Old Nigerian Girl Brought to U.S. and Held Against Her Will --

GREENBELT, Maryland - Dr. Adaobi Stella Udeozor, age 46, of Darnestown, Maryland was sentenced today to 87 months in prison followed by 3 years of supervised release for conspiracy to commit involuntary servitude and harboring an alien for financial gain, announced United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein and Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division Wan J. Kim. As part of her sentence, U.S. District Judge Peter J. Messitte also ordered Udeozor to pay restitution to the victim of \$110,250.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein stated, "This prosecution vindicates the important principle that we do not tolerate slavery or involuntary servitude in America."

"Too often human traffickers bait young girls with promises of the American dream only to then force them into involuntary servitude," said Wan J. Kim, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "Today's sentencing sends a clear message that this form of modern day slavery will not be tolerated."

"The acts committed by this individual -- holding a child as a slave, beating her, threatening her with arrest -- were more than criminal, they also exemplified the special evil implicit in the abuse of children," said Mark Bastan, Acting Special Agent-in-Charge of the Baltimore office of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). "This type of violence make it difficult for victims to come forward on their own and underscores why ICE agents approach human trafficking cases with such vigor."

On November 18, 2004, Stella Udeozor was convicted by a federal jury of conspiracy and harboring an alien for financial gain, after a six week trial. According to the evidence presented at her trial, Udeozor and her husband, George Udeozor, held a 14 year old girl from Nigeria in their Maryland home from approximately September 1996 to October 2001, forcing her to work for little or no pay, as well as physically assaulting her.

Testimony showed that the couple induced the young girl to come to the United States by promising that she would be paid and be allowed to attend school. Witnesses testified that the victim was never sent to school or paid. Evidence showed that Udeozor verbally accosted and physically punished the victim on a regular basis for purportedly not doing her work correctly.

In addition to constantly yelling at and insulting the victim, the defendant slapped her, punched her, hit her with a shoe and a stick, twisted her ear and pulled her hair. Udeozor further threatened that the victim would be arrested and sent back to Nigeria if she left the home because authorities would discover she had no “papers.”

The jury also returned three special findings relating to sentencing, concluding that the victim was held in a condition of involuntary servitude for over one year; that the offense of harboring an illegal alien was committed during the offense of involuntary servitude; and that the defendant knew or should have known that the victim was a “vulnerable victim.”

George Udeozor, age 49, is a fugitive and has not yet been tried in this case. He is currently facing extradition from Nigeria.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein thanked the U.S. Department of Justice, United States Attorney’s Office and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement for their investigative work performed in this case. Mr. Rosenstein also praised Assistant United States Attorney Mythili Raman and trial attorney Amy Pope, of the Criminal Section of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division, who prosecuted the case.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.